

SIN

1. The Definition of Sin.

- a. Sin is our “selfish independent nature, shaking our fist at God.”¹
- b. Sin is falling short of the great commandment to love God and love others.
- c. Sin “is a rebellion against God’s order for life.”²
- d. Sin is “anything done outside of God’s agenda.”
- e. Sin is “culpable shalom-breaking.”
 - (1) “[A] sin is any act—any thought, desire, emotion, word, or deed—or its particular absence, that displeases God and deserves blame. Then *sin* (no article) is the tendency to commit sins. But once we possess the concept of shalom, we are in position to specify our understanding of sin. God is, after all, not arbitrarily offended. God hates sin not just because it violates his law but, more substantively, because it violates shalom, because it breaks the peace, because it interferes with the way things are supposed to be. ...God is enthusiastically for shalom and *therefore* against sin. Let’s say that evil is any spoiling of shalom, whether physically (by cancer, say), morally, spiritually, or otherwise. Moral and spiritual evil are agential evil, that is, evil that, roughly speaking, only persons can do or have: agential evil thus comprises evil acts and dispositions. Sin is, then, any agential evil for which some person (or group of persons) is to blame. In short, sin is culpable shalom-breaking.”³
- f. “‘Sin’ is a religious term, intelligible only in the realm of religious experience and thought. ‘Evil’ is a philosophical term, and denotes every condition, circumstance, or act that in any manner or degree interferes with complete perfection or happiness of being, whether physical, metaphysical, or moral. ‘Vice’ is an ethical term; it is moral evil interpreted as an offence against the ideal or law given in the nature of man—it is a blot or stain left by the departure from nature. ‘Crime’ is a legal term, which denotes the open or public violation of the law which a society, or state has framed for its own preservation and the protection of its members. But sin differs from these in this respect: they may be in a system which knows not God, but without God there can be no sin.”⁴

2. The Biblical Terms for Sin.

- a. A rugby analogy:
 - (1) Sin: falling short of the goal line.
 - (2) Transgression: stepping out of bounds.
 - (a) Like Satan’s fall, man’s fall includes a decision to exceed the bounds the Creator has established for his creatures (Gen 3:5).

¹ Shane Louie.

² J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 257.

³ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., “Sin: Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be” (2010), https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Cornelius-Plantinga_Sin.pdf.

⁴ A. M. Fairbairn, *Christ in Modern Theology*, quoted in Lewis S. Chafer, “The Doctrine of Sin.”

- (3) Iniquity: redefining the rules.
- (4) []: yellow card.
- (5) []: red card.
- b. See Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, ch. [].

3. The Essence of Sin.

- a. “The essence of sin is a shift from a God-centered life to a self-centered life.”⁵
- b. “Sin is the despairing refusal to find your deepest identity in your relationship and service to God. Sin is seeking to become oneself, to get an identity apart from him. ... [S]in is not just the doing of bad things, but the making of good things into ultimate things. It is seeking to establish a sense of self by making something else more central to your significance, purpose, and happiness than your relationship to God.”⁶

4. The Characteristics of Sin.

- a. Sin is God-directed.
 - (1) When we wrong our fellow man, we are sinning against God.
 - (2) **Ps 51:4** 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.
- b. Sin is unoriginal.
 - (1) “Goodness is, so to speak, itself: badness is only spoiled goodness. And there must be something good first before it can be spoiled.”⁷
 - (2) “‘Culpable shalom-breaking’ suggests that sin is unoriginal, that it disrupts something good and harmonious, that (like a housebreaker) it is therefore an intruder, and that those who do it deserve reproach. To get our bearings, we have needed to see first that sin is one form of evil (an agential and culpable form) and that evil, in turn, is the disruption of shalom.”⁸
 - (3) We need the concept of a straight line to tell when one is crooked.
- c. Sin is abnormal.
 - (1) In a sinful culture among a sinful race, sin will look normal.
 - (2) “‘I have an impulse to do so and so’ does not logically lead to ‘I ought to obey this impulse’ or ‘I have a right to do so and so.’”⁹
 - (3) “[I]n the biblical worldview even when sin is devastatingly familiar, it is never normal. It is alien. It doesn’t belong in God’s world. Sin is always a departure from the norm and is assessed accordingly. Sin is deviant and perverse, an *injustice* or *iniquity* or *ingratitude*. Sin in the Exodus literature is *disorder* and *disobedience*. Sin is faithlessness, lawlessness, godlessness. Sin is both the overstepping of a line and the failure to reach it—both transgression and

⁵ Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God*, 100.

⁶ Timothy Keller.

⁷ C. S. Lewis.

⁸ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., “Sin: Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be” (2010), https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Cornelius-Plantinga_Sin.pdf.

⁹ C. S. Lewis.

shortcoming. Sin is a missing of the mark, a spoiling of goods, a staining of garments, a hitch in one's gait, a wandering from the path, a fragmenting of the whole. Sin is what culpably *disturbs* shalom. Sinful human life is a caricature of proper human life. So the biggest biblical idea about sin, expressed in a riot of images and terms, is that sin is an intruder, a notorious gate-crasher."¹⁰

d. Sin is irrational.

- (1) "In what can only be called the mystery of iniquity, human beings from nearly the beginning have so often chosen to live against God, against each other, and against God's world. We live even against ourselves."¹¹
- (2) "Sin is ultimately irrational, and sin makes us think incorrectly about God and about creation."¹²

5. The Types of Sin.

a. Imputed sin.

- (1) Every human being is credited with the responsibility and penalty for Adam's sin.
 - (a) **Ro 5:12** 12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. . . .
 - (b) **Ro 5:18-19** 18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.
 - (c) **1 Co 15:22** 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.
 - (d) "In Adam's fall we sinned all."¹³
 - (e) We are not born as a blank slate, as John Locke claimed. We are born sinners.

b. Inherited sin.

- (1) Every human being inherits, from Adam, a sinful capacity that predisposes him or her to commit personal sins.
 - (a) **Ro 6:6** 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.
 - (b) **Ro 6:12-13** 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.
 - (c) **Ro 7:14-25** 14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. 15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree

¹⁰ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., "Sin: Not the Way It's Supposed to Be" (2010), https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Cornelius-Plantinga_Sin.pdf.

¹¹ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., "Sin: Not the Way It's Supposed to Be" (2010), https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Cornelius-Plantinga_Sin.pdf.

¹² Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 79.

¹³ *McGuffey's Readers*.

with the law, that it is good. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, *but sin that dwells within me*. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, *but sin that dwells within me*. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to *the law of sin that dwells in my members*. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

- (d) **Eph 4:22** 22 ...To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires....
- (2) “In certain portions of the Scriptures, notably Romans 6:1 to 8:13 and 1 John 1:1 to 2:2, there is an important distinction between two uses of the word *sin*. The two meanings will be obvious if it is remembered that the word sometimes refers to the Adamic nature, and sometimes to evil resulting from that nature. Sin, as a nature, is the *source* of sin which is committed. Sin is the root which bears its own fruit in sin which is evil conduct. Sin is what we *are* by birth, while sins are the evil we *do* in life. There is abundant Biblical testimony to the fact that the ‘flesh,’ the ‘old man,’ or ‘sin,’ are the source of evil.”¹⁴
- (3) “It is much easier to confront a person with his *sins* than it is to confront him with his ‘sin,’ for... ‘sin’ is an fatigue which affects a man’s fundamental relationship with God; it has to do with what a man *is*; whereas ‘sins’ have to do with what a man *does*...”¹⁵
- (4) “[T]rue repentance humbly admits not only that what you have done is wrong, but that what you have *done* is the inevitable consequence of what you *are*, unless what you *are* is replaced through the Holy Spirit, by what *He is!*”¹⁶
- (5) “The first sin of Adam and Eve has spread and congealed into... a tendency of the whole race, for which we bear collective guilt. All of us are now bent toward sin. We have in the world not just sins, but sin; not just wrong acts, but also wrong tendencies, habits, practices, patterns that break down the integrity of persons, families, and whole cultures.”¹⁷
- (6) “Certainly nothing offends us more rudely than this doctrine [of original sin], and yet without this mystery, the most incomprehensible of all, we are incomprehensible to ourselves.”¹⁸

c. Personal sins.

¹⁴ Lewis S. Chafer, “The Doctrine of Sin,” 16.

¹⁵ W. Ian Thomas, *The Mystery of Godliness*, 13.

¹⁶ W. Ian Thomas, *The Mystery of Godliness*, 128.

¹⁷ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., “Sin: Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be” (2010), https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Cornelius-Plantinga_Sin.pdf.

¹⁸ Blaise Pascal.

- (1) Personal sins are any thought, words, or actions that violate the character, standards, and desire of God.
 - (a) **Ro 3:23** 23 ...For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....
 - (2) Personal sins proceed from inherited sin.
 - (3) “Men don’t just have a predisposition to sin. They are sinners.”
- d. Summary.
- (1) “Human beings are sinners for three separate reasons. First, we are sinners because we commit acts of sin. Second, even if we never committed one act of sin, we would still be sinners because we inherited a sinful human nature. This nature apparently comes through our fathers (traducianism; cf. Heb. 7:9-10). Third, we are sinners because God has imputed the guilt of Adam’s sin to us because he is the head of the race and we are his descendants.”¹⁹

6. The Sinfulness of Sin.

- a. Sin is deadly serious for unbelievers and believers.
 - (1) For unbelievers.
 - (a) “The ultimate question is how sinful humans can live with a holy God.”²⁰
 - (2) For believers.
- b. We must hold a “high view” of sin.
 - (1) This does not mean sin is good but that we take it seriously. Sin is really, really awful.
 - (2) “The more a true saint loves God..., the more he mourns for sin.”²¹
 - (3) “If you have any real knowledge of your own heart at all, this cannot possibly have escaped you, that there are things in your own heart that are most shocking and prostrating for you to find there.... The more true spirituality of mind any man has, the more exquisite will be that man’s sensibility to sin and to the exceeding sinfulness of sin.”²²
 - (4) “Sin is a big deal to God. ...All too frequently, sin is no big deal to us. Too often we rationalize, trivialize, or simply ignore sin in our lives—both in its outward manifestations and the inward dispositions of our heart.”²³
- c. A low view of sin is characteristic of our age.
 - (1) “My God! Let us give ourselves less trouble about the manners of the age, and make some small allowances to human nature; let us not examine it with so great rigour, but look upon its defects with some indulgence. This world requires a tractable virtue; one may be blameworthy by stress of wisdom; right reason avoids every extremity, and would have us be wise with sobriety. That great stiffness in the virtues of ancient times too much shocks our age and common usage; it would have mortals too perfect; we must yield to the times without obstinacy, and ‘tis an

¹⁹ Thomas Constable, *Notes on Luke*, 11.

²⁰ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 444.

²¹ Jonathan Edwards.

²² Alexander Whyte.

²³ Dallas Theological Seminary, Spiritual Formation course.

extremity of folly to busy ourselves in correcting the world. I observe, as you do, a thousand things every day, which might go better taking another course; but whatever I may discover in every transaction, people don't see me in a rage, like you. I take men with great calmness, just as they are; I accustom myself to bear with what they do...."²⁴

(2) "[W]e live in a world of the therapeutic and the psychological, where people are engaged in an endless pursuit of self-fulfilment and entitlement. Sin has become little more than the infringement of personal rights and privileges; there is little thought of defining it by the standard of the holiness of God."²⁵

d. If our view of God is low, our view of sin will be low. If our view of sin is low, our view of Christ and the cross will be low.

7. The Awareness of Sin.

- a. "When a man is getting better he understands more and more clearly the evil that is still left in him. When a man is getting worse he understands his own badness less and less. A moderately bad man knows he is not very good: a thoroughly bad man thinks he is all right."²⁶
- b. "No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good."²⁷
- c. "[S]urely what a man does when he is taken off his guard is the best evidence for what sort of a man he is? Surely what pops out before the man has time to put on a disguise is the truth? If there are rats in a cellar you are most likely to see them if you go in very suddenly. But the suddenness does not create the rats: it only prevents them from hiding."²⁸
- d. "Admittedly, people often do not feel guilty before God, since we are indoctrinated with the belief that guilt is merely a subjective feeling, a neurosis to be cured, and that we really ought to feel good about ourselves. As a result, many people come to Christianity on grounds other than guilt: a longing for inner peace and purpose, an attraction to the quality of love practiced in a local church, or a need to resolve some life crisis. But no matter what initially attracts us to Christianity, at some point each of us must confront the truth of our own moral condition: Guilt is objectively real, and we are guilty. We are sinners in the hands of a righteous God. The Holy Spirit can penetrate the hardest heart to convict us of our sinfulness. I know, because that is exactly what the Spirit did in my life."²⁹

8. The Source of Sin.

- a. The world, the flesh, and the devil tempt, and our heart decides.
- b. World.

²⁴ Moliere, *Le Misanthrope*, I, i.

²⁵ John Hannah, *Our Legacy*, 18.

²⁶ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 93.

²⁷ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 142.

²⁸ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 192.

²⁹ Charles Colson, *How Now Shall We Live?*, 274.

(1) **1 Jn 2:15-16** 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

c. Flesh.

(1) **Ro 7:14-25** 14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. 15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

d. Devil.

(1) **Ge 3:1** 1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that Yahweh God had made. He said to the woman, Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’
(2) **Ge 3:4-5** 4 But the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.
(3) **Jn 8:44** 44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires.

e. Heart.

(1) **Mt 15:19** 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.
(2) **Mk 7:20-23** 20 And [Jesus] said, What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.

9. The Attractiveness of Sin.

- a. **Ge 3:6** 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.
b. **1 Jn 2:15–17** 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is

from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

- c. Sin would have fewer takers if its effects were felt immediately.

10. Excuses for Sin.

- a. **Ge 3:12-13** 12 The man said, The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate. 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, What is this that you have done? The woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate.
- b. **Ro 1:19-20** 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.
- c. “We are all highly skilled in the art of self-justification and are able to produce innumerable reasons as to why what we did was excusable—even if it was wrong!”³⁰
- d. For sins of commission:
 - (1) “No one else will know.”
 - (2) “It’s really not that bad.”
 - (3) “Everyone does it.”
 - (4) “It’s how God made me.”
 - (5) “The standard is impossibly high.”
- e. For sins of omission:
 - (1) “It will cost too much.”
 - (2) “I don’t have the time.”
 - (3) “I’ll be rejected.”
 - (4) “I’m afraid to trust.”
 - (5) “I can’t do everything.”

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11. The Universality of Sin.

- a. Ro 3.9-18; Mt 19.17; Lk 11:13
- b. Sin is the universal human condition.
- c. “Man is a disaster!”³¹
- d. “What sort of freak then is man! How novel, how monstrous, how chaotic, how paradoxical, how prodigious! Judge of all things, feeble earthworm, repository of truth, sink of doubt and error, glory and refuse of the universe!”³²
- e. “[T]he nature of man is the same in the oppressor and the oppressed, and that the people are the chief source of the evils that surround them.”³³

³⁰ W. Ian Thomas, *The Mystery of Godliness*, 13.

³¹ Cicero.

³² Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* (New York: Penguin, 1966), 64.

³³ Will Durant, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 431.

- f. “There’s not one totally good person on earth, Not one who is truly pure and sinless.”³⁴
- g. See Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (2007).
- h. Stanford Prison Experiment, <https://www.prisonexp.org>.
- i. Newly liberated victims of oppression often end up oppressing others.
- j. “Capitalism is man oppressing man, and communism is just the opposite.”
- k. “Over the centuries we humans have ironed in this near-compulsion [to sin] with the result that each new generation enters a world that had long ago lost its Eden, a world that is now half-ruined by the billions of bad choices and millions of old habits congealed into thousands of cultures across all the ages.”³⁵
- l. “When we are born into the world, we are born into these matrices and atmospheres. Our slate has been scribbled on by others. We are born into a world in which, for centuries, sin has damaged the great interactive network of shalom—snapping or twisting the thousands of bonds that give particular beings integrity and that tie them to others.”³⁶

12. Man’s Total Depravity.

- a. Total depravity does not mean we are as evil as we possibly could be. It means our entire person, including the intellect, has been adversely affected by the fall and is separated from God.
- b. “Once the act was done . . . , [Adam and Eve] remained no long free not to sin. Man is now free only to increase his rebellion.”³⁷
- c. Body.
 - (1) Jn 9.3; Jn 5.14; Mt 8.17
- d. Soul.
 - (1) “We Western peoples are apt to think our great problems are external, environmental. We are not skilled in the inner life, where the real roots of our problem lie.”³⁸
 - (2) Jn 8.44
- e. Spirit.
- f. “People are Emersonian in their presuppositions, not Pauline.”³⁹
- g. The doctrine of expressive individualism has human nature all wrong, and that’s why it will not ever work.

³⁴ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005), Ec 7:19-20.

³⁵ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., “Sin: Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be” (2010), https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Cornelius-Plantinga_Sin.pdf.

³⁶ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., “Sin: Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be” (2010), https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Cornelius-Plantinga_Sin.pdf.

³⁷ Ronald B. Allen, *The Majesty of Man*, 93.

³⁸ T. R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 114.

³⁹ E. Peterson, *Contemplative Pastor*, 127.

- h. “After the vision of human perfectibility was incorporated into the democratic faith, the biblical view of man as sinner began to fade in the popular consciousness. But now that the masses have been comfortable for several generations with that flattering portrait, it is about to be replaced by one they can hardly imagine. There are clues aplenty in the nihilism of the visual arts, the film, stage and fiction, but soon it will be plainer.”⁴⁰
- i. “My judgment is that men go the wrong way to learn their children to pray. It seems to me a better way for people to tell their children betimes what cursed creatures they are, how they are under the wrath of God by reason of original and actual sin; also to tell them the nature of God’s wrath, and the duration of misery.”⁴¹
- j. “In the late-twentieth century, most of the competing socio-political systems embody one version or another of the Enlightenment mindset, which cannot understand the nature of evil. Only that kind of error could place the powers in the hands of officials that we have placed there and expect anything good to come of it. Those, on the other hand, who see all our troubles in the modern state and think they will be solved by a libertarian solution make the same error. Both ideologies are environmentalisms that place the blame for social malfunction everywhere but where it belongs: on man himself.”⁴²
- k. “Enlightenment thinking, especially that derived from Rousseau, found in determinism a welcome substitute for the Christian anthropology it was discarding. For if evil were not to be explained by something inherent in man, then it was natural to look to circumstances for the explanation. Objective conditions, a corrupt society, and bad teaching account for man’s destructive actions, and one need look no further to understand them.”⁴³
- l. “Modern man does not take seriously the teaching of the Fall....”⁴⁴
- m. “[H]uman depravity is the one part of Christian doctrine that can be *proved*.”⁴⁵

13. Responsibility for Sin.

- a. The creature, man, is personally responsible for sin.
- b. We are responsible for sin, both individually and collectively.
- c. “Collective guilt has replaced a sense of personal sin.”⁴⁶
- d. We are quick to see the sins of others but very often blind to our own.
- e. “Because the heart wants what it wants. That’s as far as we get. That’s the conversation- stopper. The imperial self overrules all. Inquiring into the causes of sin takes us back, again and again, to the intractable human will and to the heart’s desire

⁴⁰ Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, 86.

⁴¹ John Bunyan, quoted in Will Durant, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 209.

⁴² Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, 135.

⁴³ Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, 148.

⁴⁴ Ronald B. Allen, *The Majesty of Man*, 91.

⁴⁵ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., “Sin: Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be” (2010), https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Cornelius-Plantinga_Sin.pdf.

⁴⁶ P. T. Bauer, *Dissent on Development: Studies and Debates in Development Economics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), 21f.

that stiffens the will against all competing considerations. Like a neurotic little god, the human heart keeps ending discussions by insisting that it wants what it wants. ... Our core problem, says St. Augustine, is that the human heart, ignoring God, turns in on itself, tries to lift itself, wants to please itself, and ends up debasing itself. The person who reaches toward God and wants to please God gets, so to speak, stretched by this move, and ennobled by the transcendence of its object. But the person who curves in on himself, who wants God's gifts without God, who wants to satisfy the desires of a divided heart, ends up sagging and contracting into a little wad. His desires are provincial."⁴⁷

- f. "Environmental determinists pretend to know what is almost always hidden from us, namely, the real causes of wrongdoing. The fact is that we know more contexts than motives of human evil, and we know more motives than causes, but we almost never know all three. A main reason is that although contexts, motives, and causes of evil certainly look as if they are linked, the linkage is hard to specify. In particular, even when we know the psychological or social context of someone's evil deed, and even its motive, we still might not know exactly what caused her to do it. In general, we do not know to what extent evildoers are themselves, as agents, the main cause of their evil and to what extent they have fallen into a trap set by others. Only God knows the percentages in these matters. Only God knows the human heart. Only God knows how much of our evil is chargeable to us as sin. Only God knows when, for example, a psychological or social account of a particular evil stretches past context and motive to describe its cause."⁴⁸
- g. "[A] Christian has a sense of his moral sin and not just of metaphysical smallness in the face of the beyond. The dilemma for man is not who he is but what he has done. His predicament is not that he is small but that he is sinful."⁴⁹

14. Personal Sins.

- a. Ten commandments.
- b. Vice lists.
- c. Self.
 - (1) "Self-love...is the love of a man's own self, and of anything else for his own sake.... A man's whole life is but one continued exercise and strong agitation of it."⁵⁰
 - (2) "Moreover, whether or not they believe in purely naturalistic evolution, people who think of human beings as their own centers and lawgivers reject the whole idea of dependence on a superior being. Indeed, they find this idea entirely distasteful. To them, the proposal that we ought to worship someone who is better than we are, that we ought to study this person's will and then bend our lives to it, that we ought to confess our failures and assign life's blessings to this person—the

⁴⁷ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., "Sin: Not the Way It's Supposed to Be" (2010), https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Cornelius-Plantinga_Sin.pdf.

⁴⁸ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., "Sin: Not the Way It's Supposed to Be" (2010), https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Cornelius-Plantinga_Sin.pdf.

⁴⁹ Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death*, 273.

⁵⁰ La Rochefoucauld, quotes in Will Durant, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 156-57.

notion that we ought to take this posture toward any other person at all—is humiliatingly undemocratic, an offense to human dignity and pride. Not incidentally, the same pride that resists God and the superiority of God resists objective moral truth as well. Such truth (i.e., that some acts are right and some wrong regardless of what we think about the matter) stands against the freedom of human beings to create their own values, to make up the moral truth as they go along, to socially construct good and evil. Serious Christians think that modern attitudes of this kind are themselves old and famous exhibits of human self-deception. Humans notoriously suppress truth they dislike, St. Paul wrote (see esp. Romans 1:18). In the biblical view, not only do we sin because we are deluded; we are also deluded because we sin, because we find it convenient to misconstrue our place in the universe and to reassess divinity in it.”⁵¹

d. Lusts.

(1) Approbation lust.

(a) Ge 11.4

(2) Power lust.

(a) “I put for a general inclination of all mankind a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death.”⁵²

e. Seven cardinal sins.

(a) Pride.

- 1) “Selfies are all over Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. Selfie-mania has plagued the world for years. Risk-takers flock to the edges of cliffs and skyscrapers to take a pic as they dangle their feet off there. Many want to capture a death-defying picture that will take the internet by storm. A ‘killfie’ is a self you take in a risky or astonishing position at a dangerous location. Unofficial mental disorders like ‘selfitis’ and Snapchat dysphoria have developed. ‘Selfie or it didn’t happen.’ For many, selfies have become an unhealthy obsession. The process of posting a selfie is anxiety-inducing. Some start to feel nervous when they can’t check their notifications. Experts say the behavior is routed in ‘a form of narcissism directly connected to the human ego.’ It fulfils the ego’s need for recognition or validation, like a pat on the back. We seem to have a need to present positive versions of ourselves to the outside e-world. We spend a lot of time constructing an online an image of ourselves the way we want to look. We do it to feel popular, to modify our mood, to boost our self-confidence, to increase our social status, to copy what others do, or to create trophies of ourself. Some post solo selfies and use editing software. Millennials are on track to post 25,000 selfies in their lifetime, one selfie per day of an average lifespan. Selfie-culture is putting pressure on beauty

⁵¹ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., “Sin: Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be” (2010), https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Cornelius-Plantinga_Sin.pdf.

⁵² Thomas Hobbes, quoted in Will Durant, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 553-54.

standards and driving people to seek cosmetic procedures to look more like their digital selves.”

- (b) Envy.
 - (c) Anger.
 - (d) Greed.
 - (e) Lust.
 - (f) Sloth.
 - (g) Gluttony.
- (2) Notes.
- (a) The traditional seven cardinal sins are a useful way to categorise personal sins.
 - (b) “The list isn’t meant to cover all sin or even the worst sins but rather to identify seven foundational sins that underlie and nourish the rest.”⁵³
 - (c) “Within these seven basic categories of sin the human heart has the astounding capacity to produce an infinite number of variations.”⁵⁴
- f. Thoughts, words, actions.
- (1) Heart/mind/thoughts.
- (a) We may sin in our thoughts even if we never say or do anything based on those sinful thoughts.
 - (b) “If we reflect upon our ‘secret’ thoughts, we shall find within our own breast the seed of all those vices which we condemn in others.”⁵⁵
 - (c) Ro 2
 - (d) Lk 12:13-15; Mt 20:20-22
- (2) Words.
- (a) **Mt 12:36** 36 I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak....
 - (b) **Ja 3:5-6** 5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.
- (3) Actions.
- (a) Ro 1
- g. Personal sins may be ones of omission or commission.
- (1) **Ja 4:17** 17 So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.
- h. Some personal sins are worse than others.
- (1) Mt 7:1-5; 12:22-37; 21:33-46; Jn 19:11

15. The Ultimate Sin.

- a. Unbelief is the ultimate sin.
 - (1) Jn 3:16-18

16. The Guilt of Sin.

⁵³ Dallas Theological Seminary, Spiritual Formation course.

⁵⁴ Michael Mangis, *Signature Sins*, 27.

⁵⁵ La Rochefoucauld, quotes in Will Durant, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 156-57.

- a. All our sins are known to God. We cannot hide our sins from him. With God, all the skeletons in our closet are exposed.

17. The Consequences of Sin.

- a. Sin breaks our relationship with God, with ourselves, with one another, and with nature.
 - (1) Ps 66:18; Is 59:2; 1 Jn 1:6-7
 - (2) “The theological fact is that humans are not close to God and are not serving God.”⁵⁶
 - (3) “The particularly devouring power of sin is seen in its capacity to destroy human relations. These connections, upon which humanity is most deeply dependent, cannot survive the fire of self-serving sin.”⁵⁷
 - (4) The problem of sin is not just theological, but relational. Our breach with God entails a breach of all other relationships. Sin’s alienation is theological, sociological, psychological, and ecological.⁵⁸
- b. Inner turmoil.
 - (1) Ro 7:14-25
 - (2) “Philosophers...notice that evil is the main human problem. Even when these thinkers reject God, they recognize that the world is out of joint and that human beings, too, are ‘alienated’ or ‘divided’ or ‘repressed.’ Human beings live irrationally, as philosophers put it, or ‘inauthentically.’ The philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer described the human condition in a particularly bleak way. ‘If we want to know what people are worth morally,’ said Schopenhauer, ‘we have only to consider their fate as a whole and in general. This is want, wretchedness, affliction, misery, and death.’”⁵⁹
- c. Sin results in illness and physical death.
 - (1) Ge 38:7; 1 Co 5:5; 11:30; Ja 5:19-20; 1 Jn 5:16
- d. Spiritual death.
- e. Murder.
 - (1) Ge 4
- f. Degeneration.
 - (1) Ro 1
- g. Sin desensitises us and hardens our heart.
 - (1) “Sin is a blasting presence, and every fine power shrinks and withers in the destructive heat. Every spiritual delicacy succumbs to its malignant touch.... Sin impairs the sight, and works toward blindness. Sin benumbs the hearing and tends to make men deaf. Sin perverts the taste, causing men to confound the sweet with the bitter, and the bitter with the sweet. Sin hardens the touch, and eventually renders a man ‘past feeling.’ All these are Scriptural analogies, and their common significance appears to be this—sin blocks and chokes the fine senses of the spirit;

⁵⁶ Eugene Peterson, *Contemplative Pastor*, 126.

⁵⁷ J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 257.

⁵⁸ Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death*, 36.

⁵⁹ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., “Sin: Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be” (2010), https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Cornelius-Plantinga_Sin.pdf.

by sin we are desensitised, rendered imperceptive, and the range of our correspondence is diminished. Sin creates callousity. It hoofs the spirit, and so reduces the area of our exposure to pain.”⁶⁰

- (2) Sin clouds our spiritual vision.
- h. Sin causes social disunity and chaos.
 - (1) “The real culprit in this saga of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration is sin—the destructive power that foments disunity and conflict (Rom 8:9). As long as humanity is so enslaved, disunity and chaos will reign. No education, no wealth, no social action, no political change, and no technological advancement will be able to restore true community as long as sin continues to reign.”⁶¹
- i. Our sins don’t just impact us. They impact those around us. Personal sins usually have corporate consequences.
 - (1) **Jos 22:20** Did not Achan the son of Zerach break faith in the matter of the devoted things, and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel? And he did not perish alone for his iniquity.
- j. “They enslave their children’s children who make compromise with sin.”⁶²
- k. All sin affects others.
 - (1) Eve’s sin affected Adam, and Adam’s sin affects the entire race. No one sins totally in private without ramifications in relation to others. All that we do or fail to do affects few or many in one way or another.
 - (2) No one can sin in total isolation.
 - (3) Statistics aren’t destiny for individuals, but they are for societies.
- l. Sin, once committed, can never be undone.
 - (1) Forgiveness can be experienced and fellowship restored, but history cannot be changed or erased.
 - (2) Adam and Eve, once expelled, could not return to the Garden of Eden.
 - (3) Esau could not retrieve the birthright he sold (Heb. 12:16-17).
 - (4) Moses could not personally enter the Promised Land but could only see it from a distance because of his sin (Num, 20:12; Deut. 3:27).
 - (5) The kingdom was taken from Saul and his descendants because he did not wait for Samuel to come and offer the sacrifices (1 Sam. 13:13-14).
- m. “Whenever people try to live a lie, especially the big one, that we can be fully human without dependence on God, a false impression of reality is given. And when life is rooted in falsehood, justice and righteousness rapidly become an impossibility.”⁶³
- n. The lake of fire.
 - (1) Mt 18.11; Lk 15.4, 8, 24; Lk 12.20

⁶⁰ John Henry Jowett, in Charles Swindoll, *Grace Awakening*.

⁶¹ DTS, “Unity, Diversity, and Community” (2018).

⁶² James Russell Lowell, “The Present Crisis.”

⁶³ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 523.

- o. “Creation speaks out of both sides of its mouth now. It still sings and rings, but it also groans.”⁶⁴
- p. Abuse fosters abuse. Victims victimise others and even themselves. In this way sin gains momentum.
- q. “The result of all this spiralling and inheriting [of sin] is devastating. Whole matrices of evil appear in which various forms of wrongdoing cross-pollinate and breed.”⁶⁵
- r. With the advent of technology, man uses his creativity to invent more bizarre and brutal forms of evil.
- s. “Sin becomes the punishment of sin.”⁶⁶
- t. “The better stuff a creature is made of—the cleverer and stronger and freer it is—then the better it will be if it goes right, but also the worse it will be if it goes wrong. A cow cannot be very good or very bad; a dog can be both better and worse; a child better and worse still; an ordinary man, still more so; a man of genius still more so; a superhuman spirit best—or worst—of all.”⁶⁷

18. The Constraint of Sin.

- a. Government.
- b. Custom.
 - (1) “Millenniums of bitter experience have taught man how to hold his wilder nature in a precarious restraint; that dread knowledge is expressed in myth, ritual, usage, instinct, prejudice.”⁶⁸
- c. The Holy Spirit.
- d. God’s common grace preserves and enhances human life even when not regenerating it.
- e. God checks the spread of corruption by preserving in humanity a sense of divinity and the voice of conscience.

19. Jesus and Sin.

- a. Jesus was (and is) fully human, yet free from original, inherited, and personal sins.
 - (1) “When Jesus Christ came to earth to become the God-man, He was born outside the slave market: His humanity was perfect. Because of His unique birth, He alone had no sinful nature. He never committed a sin Himself, and no divine punishment was due Him.”⁶⁹

20. The Remedy for Sin.

- a. Sin has already been defeated.

⁶⁴ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., “Sin: Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be” (2010), https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Cornelius-Plantinga_Sin.pdf.

⁶⁵ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., “Sin: Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be” (2010), https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Cornelius-Plantinga_Sin.pdf.

⁶⁶ Augustine.

⁶⁷ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 53.

⁶⁸ Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 35.

⁶⁹ R. B. Thieme, Jr., “A Matter of Life and Death,” 6-7.

- b. “Every sin ever committed—past, present, and future—was judged on the cross.”⁷⁰
See *Unlimited Atonement*.

21. The Solution to Sin.

- a. The solution is not:

(1) Flesh.

- (a) Don’t lie to yourself. A better version of you is not the solution to your problems. Self-improvement doesn’t work.
- (b) “[W]e must not suppose that even if we succeeded in making everyone nice we should have saved their souls. A world of nice people, content in their own niceness, looking no further, turned away from God, would be just as desperately in need of salvation as a miserable world—and might even be more difficult to save. For mere improvement is not redemption, though redemption always improves people even here and now and will, in the end, improve them to a degree we cannot yet imagine. God became man to turn creatures into sons: not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man.”⁷¹

(2) Works.

- (a) Fig levels and vegetable offerings.

(3) Idolatry.

- (a) Self.

- (b) Sex.

- (c) State/social engineering.

1) “True civilisation does not lie in gas, nor in steam, nor in turntables. It lies in the reduction of traces of original sin.”⁷²

2) “The smartest blows against shalom are struck by people and movements of impressive resourcefulness—that is, by people and movements gifted by the very God and with the very goodness that their sin attacks. They also hope to gain something good by sinning. . . . People may rebel literally for the hell of it, but this is rare. Usually, they are after peace of mind, security, pleasure, *Lebensraum*, freedom, excitement. Evil needs good to be evil.”⁷³

3) *Brave New World, Walden Two*.

- (d) Science.

- (e) Stuff.

1) New stuff makes us feel better about ourselves, even though we ourselves are the same.

- b. The solution is the blood of Christ.

⁷⁰ R. B. Thieme, Jr., “A Matter of Life and Death,” 7.

⁷¹ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 215-16.

⁷² Charles Baudelaire.

⁷³ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., “Sin: Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be” (2010), https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Cornelius-Plantinga_Sin.pdf.

- (1) “As long as we feel ourselves competent to save ourselves, we will not see any need for a supernatural, divine Savior. But when we find ourselves in the throes of self-condemnation for sin against God, only a divine redeemer will do.”⁷⁴
- (2) The gospel is not primarily about sin but about our Saviour.
- (3) Jn 1.29; Mt 20.28; 26:28

22. The Mortification of Sin.

- a. Self-centredness is a subtle trap. God-centredness makes no sense from a human perspective. God-centredness requires a daily death of self and submission to God.⁷⁵
- b. “When a man is getting better he understands more and more clearly the evil that is still left in him. When a man is getting worse he understands his own badness less and less. A moderately bad man knows he is not very good: a thoroughly bad man thinks he is all right.”⁷⁶
- c. “God became man to turn creatures into sons: not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man. It is not like teaching a horse to jump better and better but like turning a horse into a winged creature. Of course, once it has got its wings, it will soar over fences which could never have been jumped and thus beat the natural horse at its own game. But there may be a period, while the wings are just beginning to grow, when it cannot do so: and at that stage the lumps on the shoulders—no one could tell by looking at them that they are going to be wings—may even give it an awkward appearance.”⁷⁷

23. The Final Defeat of Sin.

- a. The Old Testament prophets kept dreaming of time when God would put things right again (Is 2, 11, 32, 42, 60, 65).

24. Application.

- a. Thoughts.
 - (1) We must have a “high view” of sin. That is, we must take sin deathly seriously.
 - (2) Agree with God about sin.
 - (3) Respect the beast lurking within.
- b. Words.
- c. Actions.
 - (1) “What are the limits (time, energy, power, money) I’m currently violating? Our souls are in danger when we go beyond our limits. One could argue that this is the essence of sin, as seen in the Garden of Eden. God set a limit, and humanity wilfully crossed it. Whenever we go beyond our limits, we are entering into Satan’s territory. What are the limits we are violating? Are we working non-stop? Are we mismanaging money? Are we abusing power? Are we playing the role of

⁷⁴ B. B. Warfield.

⁷⁵ H. Blackaby, *Experiencing God*, 103.

⁷⁶ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 93.

⁷⁷ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 215-16.

God? Are we taking Sabbath? Are we playing with our children? Do we have a life outside of ‘church work’?”⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Unknown.

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Videos

